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INVESTIGATIONS AT LOCH NESS AND SEVEN OTHER FRESHWATER SCOTTISH LAKES

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INTRODUCTION

In August, 1982, M. Pat Meaney and Joseph W. Zarzynski conducted camera surveillance operations at several Scottish Highland lochs. The time spent in the United Kingdom amounted to two weeks (August 6–19, 1982), with most of this period devoted to cryptozoological research and field operations.

The purpose of this two-week foray was: (1) to conduct surface surveillance using binoculars and high-powered still and movie camera gear at Loch Ness and seven other freshwater bodies where sightings similar to those at Loch Ness have been reported; (2) to complete a logistical survey for a tentative, more sophisticated return expedition to one of the lochs; and (3) to continue to cultivate the lines of communication with American and U.K. cryptozoologists working in Scotland.

Because our time was limited, we decided to focus our approach on a four-pronged strategy: (1) several days' surface surveillance at Loch Ness; (2) several days' surface surveillance at Loch Morar; (3) research and logistical work at Loch Ness, Loch Morar, and some of the other Scottish Highland lochs (see Elizabeth Montgomery Campbell and David Solomon, *The Search for Morag*, Tom Stacy, London, 1972); and (4) assist any other research groups or individuals involved in cryptozoological fieldwork, if our time and resources permitted.

We both have had considerable experience in investigating aquatic environments. Meaney has had practical field experience at Lake Champlain (located in Vermont, New York, and Quebec) in 1981 and 1982, working with the Lake Champlain Investigation (LCPI) team in shore and vessel camera monitoring, as well as in scuba-diving operations. She also aided the Rochester Engineering Laboratories and LCPI in the deployment of side-scan and Raytheon fixed mode sonars at Lake Champlain. This was Meaney's first expedition to the "monster lochs" of Scotland. Zarzynski, as director of LCPI, has been investigating "lake monsters" since 1974: this was Zarzynski's sixth excursion to Loch Ness (others in 1975, 1977, 1978, 1979 and 1981).

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

We decided the best strategy to utilize was surface surveillance from shoreline vantage points, from our rented car at roadside laybys, and, if possible, from a vessel.

We will first briefly describe the freshwater bodies we visited in Scotland, which will be followed by a synopsis of our fieldwork at these lochs.

Physical Features/Sizes of Scottish Lochs Visited

—Loch Ness: By water volume, Loch Ness is the largest freshwater body in the British Isles; it is 22 miles long and 2 miles wide; its maximum depth is believed to be 975 feet (see Nicholas Witchell, *The Loch Ness Story*, Corgi Books, London, 1982), although this maximum depth figure is disputed by several other researchers.

—Loch Morar: It is 11 miles long and about 1½ miles wide (see Campbell and Solomon above); maximum depth is 1,017 feet, making it probably the deepest lake in Europe (see J. B. Sissons, *The Evolution of Scotland's Scenery*, Archon Books, Hamden, Connecticut, 1967).

—Loch Assynt: It is 6⅓ miles long; maximum depth is 282 feet (Tom Weir, *The Scottish Lochs*, Constable and Co., London, 1980).

—Loch Arkaig: It is 12 miles long, and has a mean breadth of one-half mile; maximum depth is 359 feet (see Weir above).

—Loch Sheil: It is 17 miles long (estimate from a U.K. ordnance map); maximum depth is 420 feet (see Weir above).

—Loch Quoich: It is 9 miles long, and 1½ miles wide at its greatest point (see Weir above); its maximum depth is 281 feet.

—Loch Oich: It is 4 miles long, with a one-fifth-mile mean breadth (see Weir above); maximum depth is about 133 feet (see Weir above).

—Loch Lochy: It is 10 miles long, with an average width of three-fifths mile; maximum depth is 531 feet (see Weir above).

Fieldwork

—August 7, 1982: Surface surveillance at Loch Lochy, Loch Oich, and Loch Ness: we used a 7 × 35 pair of binoculars, two 35 mm cameras with 135 mm, 80/205 mm, and 600 mm lenses, and a Nikon Super 8 mm movie camera with 8 × 1 power; the weather conditions were cool and the lochs' surfaces rather calm (no sightings).

—August 8, 1982: Surface surveillance at Loch Ness (Fig. 1); the weather was windy, and the loch's surface was choppy (no sightings).

—August 9, 1982: Surface surveillance was conducted from both shoreline and aboard the vessel *Kelpie*, piloted by Ivor Newby (Academy of Applied Science member); vessel rendezvous with Adrian Shine's team (Loch Ness & Morar Project), and their sonar vessel, *New Atlantis*; loch

FIG. 1.—Western end of Loch Ness, location of the town of Fort Augustus.

conditions were cool, windy, and the water was very choppy (no sightings).

—August 10, 1982: Surface surveillance at Loch Ness, and then an excursion to Loch Assynt for surface surveillance; the weather at both lochs was cool; windy and choppy waters (no sightings).

—August 11, 1982: Brief shore-watching sessions at Loch Ness, Loch Quoich, Loch Arkaig, and Loch Shiel; the weather was sunny, but windy (no sightings); we also made a trip to Dundreggan, located a few hundred yards north of the River Moriston in Glenmoriston, west of Loch Ness. Dundreggan means "Hill of the Dragon" (see Witchell above). Legend holds that Fingal killed a dragon at this spot, and that it was then buried there.

—August 12, 1982: Surface surveillance at Loch Shiel and Loch Morar; weather conditions were windy, and both lochs had choppy water (no sightings).

—August 13, 1982: Surface surveillance at Loch Morar after a hike of 3½ miles each way along a mountain footpath overlooking the north shore of Loch Morar: our 7-mile hike with cameras took us past Brinacory Island, toward Swordland, and back; camera watch aboard Loch Morar Superintendent Jim Penny's sailboat on the western end of Loch Morar (Fig. 2); weather conditions were sunny, with some wind (no sightings).

FIG. 2.—View looking west on Loch Morar on a "sunny" day. At 1,017 feet, it is the deepest lake in Europe.

—August 14, 1982: Surface surveillance at Loch Morar and Loch Shiel; weather conditions were cool, with sunshine, and not much wind (no sightings).

The other days of our United Kingdom excursion were devoted to visiting Lake Bala (Llyn Tegid), a reputed "monster lake" in Wales, and visiting various individuals. Among them were: Jack Bruce, Keeper of the RAF Museum at Hendon, England (on the matter of the Loch Ness Wellington Bomber); Ivor Newby; Adrian Shine; Jim Hogan, of Caley Cruisers, Ltd.; Tony Harmsworth, Curator of the Loch Ness Monster Exhibition; David James, former Member of Parliament; Tim Dinsdale; Gordan MacKintosh, of the Academy of Applied Science; and Mrs. Basil Cary, of Strone.

RESULTS

Poor weather conditions plagued our field operations throughout most of the expedition. However, we were able to spend some time on camera monitoring, and we also were able to survey first-hand some of the other Scottish freshwater bodies in which sightings of unidentified animals reportedly occur, although they are not given the publicity of the Loch Ness sightings.

After the expedition, our thoughts closely echoed those of Peter Costello

(see Peter Costello, *In Search of Lake Monsters,* Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, New York, 1974), who stated: "The Loch Ness animals are not unique, either in Scotland or the world. The more attention given to reports from other places, the sooner the real existence of these animals will be completely established."

Nonetheless, of the Scottish lochs we visited, at least one should be considered for elimination as a possible habitat of a Loch Ness-like animal species. That body is Loch Quoich.

Although located in one of "the most inaccessible regions of Scotland" (see Weir above), and having a tradition of being the home of "water monsters" (see Campbell and Solomon above, and Constance Whyte, *More Than a Legend,* Hamish Hamilton, London, 1957), it is now a reservoir behind a 1,000-foot-high dam. The Loch Quoich reservoir "holds 12,500 million cubic feet compared to 8,345 million cubic feet in pre-hydroelectric days. The rise of 100 feet in level made the loch 9 miles in length, whereas it used to be only 7 miles in length, doubling its maximum breadth to make it 1½ miles. Two small dams at the western end prevent spillage to the Atlantic watershed" (see Weir above). Thus, it seems unlikely that the reservoir-loch could hold any Loch Ness-type animals today.

After studying the numerous accounts of sightings or legends of "water beasts" in Scottish waters, we have concluded that the cryptozoologist is confronted with the problem of trying to disentangle objective fact from Scottish legend. Campbell and Solomon (see above) summed this up when they wrote:

> It is quite clear from the accounts collected already by Mrs. Whyte and others that there is a core of "misfits" among the myths, that these involve quite a number of lochs in the Western Highlands, and that hundreds of people have probably gone to their graves under the suspicion of romancing when they were telling no more than the truth.

Future Plans

We hope to return to Scotland to further investigate the legitimacy of claims that there are other Scottish "freshwater lochs from which sightings on the Loch Ness pattern have been reported" (see Campbell and Solomon above).

Only two Scottish Highland lochs, Ness and Morar, have been studied intensively. One can only wonder what evidence might have already been uncovered had one of these more remote and less scrutinized lakes been investigated with the same enthusiasm and scientific sophistication that has been undertaken at Loch Ness.